

FIRE MITIGATION ACTION PLAN

The following fire mitigation goals and actions for Kootenai County are the results of an extensive community participation program and the work of the Wildland Urban Interface Planning Committee. The symbol that precedes each of the actions identifies the time frame for completion of that activity: short-range ❶, medium-range ❷ or long-range ❸. Short-range actions should be accomplished within a year or two, medium-range within 1 to 5 years, and long-range 5 or more years. Some actions may also be ongoing without regard to assigned time range

FIRE MITIGATION GOALS

Emphasize prevention of wildland urban interface fires using a proactive, cooperative approach with incentive measures.

Ensure that the land development ordinances and building codes in Kootenai County support the mitigation of wildland urban interface fire danger.

Develop a county wide road and street system that provides for efficient fire fighting and clear evacuation routes.

Promote effective fuel treatment programs for homeowners and businesses that are carried out on an ongoing basis in all wildland urban interface areas in Kootenai County.

Advocate responsible practices for land development, recreational activities, and commercial operations to reduce loss from wildland urban interface fire on public and private land in Kootenai County.

Provide the appropriate resources to maintain an effective emergency response system to wildland urban interface fires in Kootenai County.

Sustain a coordinated and cooperative program of timely information and educational programs for county residents, businesses, and recreational home owners.

FIRE MITIGATION ACTIONS

.PREVENTION

Activities that reduce and/or keep hazards from getting worse.

❶*Institute a program for creating and maintaining neighborhood fire prevention plans in wildland urban interface areas.*

Discussions with the committee, fire chiefs and citizens emphasized the need for citizens to take some actions for themselves. Neighbors helping neighbors to establish a fire prevention program would help build familiarity with local fire issues and create neighborhood preparedness.

Who: Kootenai County Disaster Services, Local Emergency Planning Committee's (LEPC) Wildland Urban Interface Fire Mitigation Committee (WUI); County Fire Districts.

When: Within the next 3 years.

Resources: Wildland Urban Interface Community & Rural Assistance Program, BLM; Community Development Block Grant Program, planning only.

①*Designate the Kootenai County Local Emergency Planning Committee's Wildland Urban Interface Task Force as the responsible entity for ensuring the mitigation plan is implemented.*

The Local Emergency Planning Committee was the sponsor of the plan and, thus, became the logical responsible entity for insuring its implementation.

Who: Kootenai County Board of Commissioners, Local Emergency Planning Committee

When: As soon as the plan is completed.

Resources: Policy decision, none needed

⑤*Work toward developing county regulations for enforcing access requirements of the fire code.*

Road access and maintenance was a primary concern of fire districts. The inability to access properties through narrow, poorly maintained, or steep driveways or roads increases risk to the individuals living along these roads and the amount of possible property damage is one of the most important issues that needs to be addressed by this plan.

Who: WUI Task Force; Kootenai County Planning and Building Departments; Kootenai County Fire Coop, East Side, Lakes, Post Falls and Worley, Highway Districts, Idaho Department of Transportation..

When: 5 years or more

Resources: Policy action, none needed

③ *Encourage utility companies to reduce ignition fuels and windfall hazards in power line corridors and install underground lines in new subdivisions and when replacing older lines.*

Downed power lines are a source of ignition for wildland fires. Firestorm 1991 was started by high winds downing power lines and igniting fuel on the ground. Reducing fuel in these corridors and placing lines underground would help reduce the hazard.

Who: WUI Task Force, Kootenai County, Highway Districts,
Local Emergency Planning Committee

When: 5 years.

Resources: Policy action, none needed.

① *Advocate for water districts to provide emergency access to water supply via hydrants along service delivery lines.*

Lack of sufficient water supply makes it difficult for firefighters to suppress fires. Whenever possible, water districts can help this problem by increasing access to water along their delivery lines.

Who: WUI Task Force, Fire Districts and Departments, Water
Resources, Local Emergency Planning Committee

When: As soon as the plan is adopted

Resources: Policy action, none needed.

① *Limit burning from May 10 through October 20th and in other situations as needed.*

Open pit fires and brush burning are two of the primary sources of ignition for a wildfire. Permits help notify the fire districts of the location and timing of burns and provide an early warning system for wildfires.

Who: USFS, BLM, County Fire Districts and Departments, State
Fire Marshal

When: 1 year

Resources: Permit fees.

① *Encourage the North Idaho Building Contractors Association and other local land development professionals to build a model residential development demonstrating best management practices for fire safety.*

Homeowners are not always aware of the proper materials for fire safe construction or how to create survivable space adjacent to their homes. By constructing a model subdivision containing these fire safe actions, there will be an excellent example for builders as well as contractors.

Who: WUI Task Force, Idaho Department of Lands, North Idaho Building Contractors Association, Kootenai County Fire Coop and Local Emergency Planning Committee

When: Within 2 years.

Resources: Idaho Department of Lands grants assistance, North Idaho Building Contractors Association

① *Contact outside communities and agencies to learn what wildland urban interface fire prevention techniques worked and those that did not and incorporate this knowledge in future fire mitigation activities.*

Wildland fires and wildland urban interfaces exist throughout North America. There is no need to reinvent the wheel. Ideas can be shared by staying in contact with the activities of these communities.

Who: WUI Task Force, Kootenai County Fire Coop, state and federal agencies with responsibilities for fire mitigation in the wildland urban interface.

When: Ongoing.

Resources: Individual entities budgets.

⑤ *Encourage all land development ordinances and codes to include:*
-requirements for adequate water supply for fire fighting,
-two means of ingress and egress where feasible,
-incentives for construction with fire resistant materials,
-additional fire protection measures for large structures
-pertinent sections of the Wildland Urban Interface Fire Code.

Enforcement of fire safe development codes was another top priority of the fire chiefs. The codes need to be reviewed and means explored for improving development and construction in the wildland urban interface zone.

Who: WUI Task Force, Kootenai County Fire Coop, state and local fire marshals, Kootenai County Planning and Building Departments, Board of County Commissioners.

When: 5 years or more

Resources: Policy decision, none needed.

PROPERTY PROTECTION

Activities undertaken by property owners.

❶ Establish a program for home owners offering an assessment of the fire safe worthiness of their property and an incentive system to use fire safe building materials and reduce fuel loads on their property.

One of the major actions that can reduce risk and property loss is the creation of a fire safe home and property. Currently, the Local Emergency Planning Committee has the ability to assist property owners in the creation of survivable space through its grant award. This needs to be a major short range goal.

Who: WUI Task Force, Fire Districts and Departments, Kootenai County Planning and Building Departments, Kootenai County Fire Coop, Student Conservation Association.

When: Immediately and ongoing.

Resources: 2002 Grant Programs, and in the future, the following programs: Wildland Urban Interface Community & Rural Fire Assistance, BLM; Economic Action, State Fire Assistance and Volunteer Assistance, USFS, RC& D

❷ Promote research and development projects such as a model program to research use of an emergency generator connected to home electric and pump systems to help reduce risk and damage from wildfire.

Various research and development programs were suggested during the planning process. These programs need field testing. Some monies need to be allocated to this process.

Who: Idaho Department of Lands, Bureau of Land Management,

University of Idaho

When: Ongoing

Resources: Agency research and development budgets, university grant programs

❶ *Publish an annual list of local contractors who build fire safe structures and/or create survivable space.*

Some property owners may want to hire contractors who specialize in the construction of fire safe homes and the creation of survivable space. This list would allow them to contact the appropriate contractors.

Who: North Idaho Build Contractors Association

When: By January 2003 and annually thereafter.

Resources: North Idaho Building Contractors Association, Insurance Companies

❷ *Sponsor an annual clean-up, fuels reduction week with incentives such as business related discounts and free pickup of waste materials.*

Fuels will continue to collect on the floors of the wildland urban interface zone even after their original clean-up. Sponsoring an annual clean-up day will encourage property owners to continue to clear their property.

Who: WUI Task Force in cooperation Kootenai County Fire Coop and local businesses.

When: Spring 2003 and annually thereafter.

Resources: Business sponsors, volunteers.

❸ *Offer individual homeowners a fuel treatment plan that reduces large pieces of wood into fireplace wood and disposes of other debris and organize a community services projects to assist elderly and handicapped homeowners reduce fuel loads on their property.*

Often fuel treatment programs dispense of the debris on a property. The property owner may be more likely to be involved if the debris can be put to use rather than discarded. Assisting homeowners who are not capable of clearing their own property helps reduce risk to neighboring properties.

Who: Community service agencies.

When: Initiate in 2002 and annual thereafter.

Resources: 2002 WUI grant programs; Student Conservation Association; Wildland Urban Interface Community & Rural Fire Assistance, BLM; Economic Action, State Fire Assistance and Volunteer Assistance, USFS

NATURAL RESOURCE PROTECTION

Activities to preserve or restore natural areas or natural functions.

③Identify “road blocks” federal agencies encounter in treating slash fuels and fuels in general.

Federal agencies must deal with a variety of environmental constraints to fuel treatment. Also, public perceptions can create confusion about treatment issues. Can some of these restraints be reduced? Are there methods to insure that environmental damage is minimal during fuel treatment activities? Can public perceptions be changed? These questions need to be explored to help make federal fuel treatment activities efficient and timely.

Who: USFS, BLM and other local land management agencies.

When: 5 years or more

Resources: Web sites, ongoing education programs, publicity.

②Encourage property owners to use grant programs to create retention facilities which can serve a dual purpose as water supplies.

As noted above, water supplies for fire fighting are critical. Having additional water supplies at the location of homes can help provide an additional resource.

Who: WUI Task Force, Kootenai County Building and Planning Departments, Fire Districts and Departments

When: Ongoing.

Resources: USDA, Natural Resource Conservation Service

①Explore the potential of making slash and deadfall available for firewood for senior citizens and handicapped or low income residents and use good wood for lumber for charitable purposes.

Again, making good use of debris encourages efficient clean-up and helps those not capable of clearing their property.

Who: WUI Task Force, volunteer groups, i.e., Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts

When: Immediately.

Resources: 2002 WUI grant programs, Student Conservation Association; Wildland Urban Interface Community & Rural Fire Assistance, BLM; Economic Action, State Fire Assistance and Volunteer Assistance, USFS, volunteer programs

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Measures taken to prepare for, during and after a fire to minimize its impact.

①Maintain and activate an interagency joint information center of local, state and federal agencies during wildland fires that ensures accurate, up to date information is delivered to the public.

Emergency service personnel noted that information that is provided to the public by different agencies involved in fire fighting is often confusing if not contradictory. Having one public information officer who coordinates all information would lead to better clarity.

Who: County Disaster Services and all local, state and federal fire agencies, Coeur d'Alene Interagency Dispatch Center.

When: Immediately

Resources: Agency budgets

①Maintain an interagency radio link to assure effective communication and coordination between Kootenai County Disaster Services, Fire Districts and state and federal agencies.

Effective communication between various agencies during a wildland fire is imperative. Often there are too many people on a network causing confusion and

increasing the possibility of misinformation. Maintaining an effective link is an important tool in being effective.

Who: Kootenai County Disaster Services, Fire Districts and Departments and all other government entities with wildland urban interface fire responsibilities, Kootenai County 911 and Board of County Commissioners

When: Immediately and ongoing thereafter.

Resources: Assistance to Fire Fighters Grant Program, USFA

① Assist efforts of fire districts to coordinate a minimum standard for wildland urban interface training, have trained Public Information Officers, and maintain a sufficient number of Type III qualified personnel.

Local fire districts struggle to recruit and train personnel. An effort to increase their training capabilities helps to improve the effectiveness of fire fighting in the wildland urban interface zone.

Who: Kootenai County Disaster Services, County Fire chiefs Association, USFS, IDL, BLM and Coeur d’Alene Interagency Dispatch Center.

When: Ongoing.

Resources: Assistance to Fire Fighters Grant Program, USFA.

① Produce, on an ongoing basis, up-to-date hard copy and electronic county maps with evacuation routes, hospitals, road names, and current addresses and latitude and longitude.

Property owners who must evacuate during a wildland fire or are in need of emergency services need to know where appropriate facilities are located. The purpose of these maps would help inform them in case of an emergency.

Who: Kootenai County Assessor and Mapping, Idaho Department of Lands, USFS and BLM.

When: Ongoing.

Resources: County Assessor Budget, fees for map duplication.

②Keep current and distribute evacuation plans with safety zones and information which encourages homeowners to evacuate in a timely manner.

Evacuation routes need to be predetermined to assist homeowners in case of emergencies. Delivering these evacuation plans to homeowners would assist in this.

Who: Kootenai County Fire Coop, Local Emergency Planning Committee

When: By 2004 and ongoing thereafter.

Resources: Fire Districts; Kootenai County Sheriff Department; Volunteer Agencies, e.g. American Red Cross; Telephone companies; State Fire Assistance Program.

①Encourage families to designate a meeting place and phone contact during and after fire evacuation.

Maintaining contact with family members during an emergency reduces fear and anxiety. Having a known place to call or go to during the emergency helps family members know where each other are.

Who: WUI, Kootenai County Fire Coop, state and federal agencies with wildland urban interface fire responsibilities.

When: Ongoing

Resources: None needed.

PUBLIC INFORMATION

Activities that advise about hazards and ways to protect people and property.

①Develop an interagency agreement to assure consistency during emergencies between information and education programs for homeowners to avoid people getting “different stories”.

During discussions about education programs, several people mentioned the information coming from different agencies was often contradictory. Creating consistency helps the learning keep facts and actions straight.

Who: Kootenai County, Fire Districts and Departments, Idaho Department of Land, Bureau of Land Management and Forest Service.

When: Within the next 2 years.

Resources: WUI Task Force

⑤Purchase, install and maintain Smokey Bear Signs (high, moderate, low fire conditions) in wildland urban interface neighborhoods.

Smokey Bear signs help inform the public about the fire danger in the wildland urban interface zone. More of them placed in strategic places would help keep everyone informed.

Who: Kootenai County Fire Coop in cooperation with USFS.

When: As requested by neighborhoods.

Resources: Business sponsorship, volunteer contributions.

①Work with insurance companies and Realtors to publish a “Welcome to Fire Country” type pamphlet to distribute with building permit applications and residential sales agreements.

Many migrants to Kootenai County are unaware of the potential hazards of living in the wildland urban interface zone. These materials would alert them to these hazards and assist them in finding appropriate locations for their homes.

Who: WUI Task Force

When: Within 1 year.

Resources: Insurance Companies, Kootenai County Realtors, Kootenai County Building Department.

①Build and maintain a demonstration trailer with a good/bad example of residential building materials and survivable space.

Demonstrating the effectiveness of appropriate building materials and survivable space can help in the education process.

Who: Kootenai County Fire Prevention Co-op

When: In 2002.

Resources: 2002 grant programs.

① Supply real estate professionals, insurance providers, and building contractors with information on wildland urban interface fire risks and hazards to assist buyers and sellers to be better informed.

Who: WUI Task Force, Kootenai County Planning and Building Departments.

When: As soon as the plan is adopted and ongoing thereafter.

Resources: Publications available from University of Idaho Extension, FEMA, USFS, and BLM along with WUI Task Force

⑤ Work with local educators to establish a wildland fire component in the public schools fire education curriculum.

Current emphasis on testing and other structural curricula problems make it difficult to build fire education into public school programs. Fire prevention personnel need to work closely with the schools to help insert these programs into the normal education program.

Who: Kootenai County Fire Prevention Co-op

When: Within the next 5 years.

Resources: Broaden current education program.

① Develop an interactive internet site with a wildland urban interface fire theme for questions, comments, sign-up for home evaluations, volunteer opportunities, and targeted information for recreational home owners.

Given the extent of the use of the internet, the creation of a wildland urban interface home page would make it possible for the public to have quick access to appropriate information.

Who: Kootenai County Fire Prevention Co-op

When: Within 2 years.

Resources: Wildland Urban Interface Community & Rural Fire Assistance Program (development), annual funding from Kootenai County Fire Prevention Co-op budget, University of Idaho Extension and advertising.

① Support the efforts of the Kootenai County Fire Prevention Co-op and other agencies at the County Fair and Safety Day at Silver Lake Mall.

The purpose of this action is to help increase exposure to the problems and solutions to wildland fires. The designated locations might be a beginning to finding other venues for disseminating information.

Who: Kootenai County Board of Commissioners, Kootenai County Fire Coop, Local Emergency Planning Committee, Fair Board, Mall Management.

When: Ongoing

Resources: Kootenai County, University of Idaho Extension and other supporting agencies (e.g. IDL, BLM, USFS) budgets and educational materials.